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SUBJECT: NIGER: CONSOLIDATING PEACE IN THE AIR AND AZAWAK

REF: NIAMEY 391

11. SUMMARY. MORE THAN 11 YEARS AFTER THE SIGNING OF PEACE ACCORDS, FORMER MEMBERS OF VARIOUS TUAREG RESISTANCE FRONTS HAVE BEGUN TO RECEIVE THE SUPPORT THEY HAVE BEEN PROMISED. ON SEPTEMBER 8, IN A HALF-DAY CEREMONY IN AGADEZ, THE FIRST CHECKS WERE HANDED TO THE HEADS OF 25 COOPERATIVE GROUPS. KEY GOVERNMENT OF NIGER (GON) OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM DONORS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS TWO-YEAR, UNDP-MANAGED PROGRAM TO ASSIST 3,160 EX-REBELS WERE IN ATTENDANCE. MUCH FANFARE AND PRESS COVERAGE WAS GIVEN TO THIS IMPORTANT STEP IN CONSOLIDATING PEACE IN THE AIR AND AZAWAK REGIONS. EMBASSY'S USAID CONTRACTOR REPRESENTED AMBASSADOR AT THE CEREMONY AND PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING REPORT ON THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

LONG ROAD TO PUTTING CASH IN THE EX-REBELS' HANDS

12. FOLLOWING FIVE YEARS OF SPORADIC ARMED CONFLICT WITH 13 TUAREG REBEL FRONTS, PEACE ACCORDS WERE SIGNED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF NIGER (GON) ON APRIL 24, 1995. THESE ACCORDS PROVIDED FOR THE INTEGRATION OF EX-FRONT MEMBERS INTO THE GON CIVIL SERVICE AND SECURITY FORCES, AS WELL AS CASH PAYMENTS TO SOME SENIOR FRONT COMMANDERS. NUMEROUS MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE ACCORDS AND THE GON HAS ORGANIZED SEVERAL KEY EVENTS (E.G., THE "PEACE FLAME" IN 2000 WHERE ARMS COLLECTED FROM FORMER REBELS WERE BURNED IN A HUGE BONFIRE IN AGADEZ). THE REMAINING ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PEACE ACCORDS IS PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO 3,160 FORMER MEMBERS OF TUAREG REBEL FRONTS.

13. IN 1994, THE GON ESTABLISHED A HIGH COMMISSION FOR THE RESTORATION OF PEACE AND CHARGED IT WITH EXECUTING PROGRAMS TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE WITH EX-TUAREG REBELS IN NORTHERN NIGER AND, LATER, WITH THE 890 TOUBOU REBELS IN EASTERN NIGER (KAWAR AND MANGA REGIONS) WHO SIGNED A PEACE AGREEMENT IN 1998. CURRENTLY, THE HEAD OF THIS COMMISSION IS MOHAMED ANACKO, FORMER LEADER OF AN EX-TUAREG FRONT THAT WAS ONE OF THE LAST TO SIGN THE PEACE ACCORDS. ONE OF THE COMMISSION'S TASKS HAS BEEN TO CONDUCT A CENSUS OF ALL THE FORMER TUAREG MEMBERS ELIGIBLE FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

14. IT WAS AGREED THAT EACH OF THE 13 EX-TUAREG FRONTS WOULD PROVIDE THE NAMES OF 220 PEOPLE (MEN AND WOMEN) WHO COULD BE CONSIDERED FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES. AT PRESENT, 1,067 EX-REBELS FROM SIX FRONTS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED IN THE AGADEZ REGION, AS HAVE 1,106 EX-REBELS FROM SEVEN FRONTS IN THE NORTH TAHOUA-AZAWAK REGION. AS THESE FORMER FRONT MEMBERS BEGIN RECEIVING FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WORK CONTINUES TO REGISTER ADDITIONAL EX-REBELS IN PLACES AS FAR AWAY FROM AGADEZ AS NIAMEY, TILLABERI AND ZINDER. ALTOGETHER, 11 OF THE 13 FRONTS HAVE COMPLETED THE REGISTRATION PROCESS.

COMPLEX PROCESS TO MAKE CASH WORK FOR EX-REBELS

15. ACCORDING TO AGREEMENTS REACHED, EACH FORMER REBELS IS TO RECEIVE 165,000 CFA FRANCS (USD 323) BUT THEY WOULD NOT RECEIVE THIS SUM INDIVIDUALLY BUT AS PART OF A GREATER AMOUNT TO BE PROVIDED TO A CO-OPERATIVE GROUP THEY HAVE FORMED WITH OTHER EX-REBELS. THESE CO-OPS ARE GENERALLY COMPOSED OF SEVEN TO 10 MEMBERS AND THEY CAN BE MEN OR WOMEN, OR BOTH. THEREFORE, A GROUP WITH 10 MEMBERS WOULD RECEIVE 1,65,000 CFA (USD 3,230) UPON APPROVAL OF THEIR APPLICATION FOR A MICRO-PROJECT. HOWEVER, THE CURRENT UNDP PROGRAM REQUIRES THAT ONLY 80 PERCENT OF THIS AMOUNT BE PROVIDED, WITH THE REMAINING 20 PERCENT TO BE GRANTED FOLLOWING AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE APPROVED ACTIVITY.

16. TO DATE, MICRO-PROJECTS HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR 106 CO-OPS IN THE AGADEZ REGION AND 104 CO-OPS IN THE AZAWAK REGION. ALTOGETHER, 2,173 EX-REBELS ARE MEMBERS OF THESE 210 CO-OPS AND THE ACTIVITIES THEY WILL BE PURSUING INCLUDE CEREALS BANKS, COMMUNITY GARDENS, LIVESTOCK MARKETING, STORES FOR THE SALE OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS, ETC. THE HEAVY AND COMPLEX ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN OF PROCESSING AND FOLLOWING UP ON THE WORK OF ALL THESE CO-OPS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IS OBVIOUS. THIS BURDEN IS EVEN GREATER WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THAT THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA COVERED BY A DOZEN PROJECT STAFF IS ABOUT 250,000 SQUARE KILOMETERS (AN AREA LARGER THAN THE STATES OF VIRGINIA AND MARYLAND COMBINED.)

EX-REBELS COMPLAIN CASH IS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

17. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS USD 1.6 MILLION, TWO-YEAR PROJECT (NOW NEARING THE END OF ITS FIRST YEAR) WILL BE SEVERELY CHALLENGED

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TO CONTINUE THE IMPLEMENTATION MOMENTUM AND VERIFICATION THAT THE FUNDS PROVIDED WILL GO FOR THE PURPOSES INTENDED. THE 25 CHECKS, DISTRIBUTED WITH MUCH FANFARE ON SEPTEMBER 8, ARE A FIRST STEP IN WHAT COULD BECOME A LONG PROCESS. TWO YEARS IS PROBABLY NOT ENOUGH TIME TO COMPLETE THIS PROCESS AND THE UNDP CLAIMS THE PROJECT IS SHORT-FUNDED BY ABOUT USD 220,000.

18. CURRENT CONTRIBUTORS AND THE AMOUNTS PROVIDED TO THIS EFFORT TO CONSOLIDATE PEACE IN THE AIR AND AZAWAK REGIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS: GON (USD 157,000); UNDP (USD 580,000); FRANCE (USD 360,000); LIBYA (USD 318,000); AND, U.S. (USD 225,000). THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION REPRESENTS ONE OF THE FIRST DISBURSEMENTS OF FUNDS MADE UNDER THE TRANS-SAHARA COUNTER TERRORISM PARTNERSHIP (TSCTP). POST HAS SUBMITTED A REQUEST FOR AN ADDITIONAL USD 200,000 IN ESF FUNDING TO PROVIDE FURTHER SUPPORT THIS PROGRAM (REFTEL).

KEEPING THE PEACE REQUIRES A SUSTAINED COMMITMENT

19. THE FUNDING ISSUE IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE STRONG FEELING AMONG EX-REBEL GROUPS THAT THE MONEY THEY ARE FINALLY RECEIVING IS INADEQUATE TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. DURING THE SEPTEMBER 8 CEREMONY EX-FRONT LEADERS SAID IN THEIR SPEECHES THAT THEY ARE STRONGLY COMMITTED TO PEACE BUT THAT THE AMOUNTS THEY ARE NOW RECEIVING AFTER WAITING OVER 11 YEARS ARE JUST TOO LITTLE. ONE GROUP LEADER REFERRED TO THE AMOUNT OF MONEY BEING PROVIDED TO EACH EX-REBEL AS RIDICULOUSLY SMALL. WHILE IT IS CLEAR THEY ARE HAPPY TO BE RECEIVING SOMETHING, IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT THEY WERE EXPECTING A MUCH HIGHER PEACE DIVIDEND.

110. COMMENT. KEEPING THE PEACE IN THE AIR AND AZAWAK REGIONS WILL REQUIRE MORE THAN A TWO-YEAR, USD TWO MILLION PROJECT, A SUM OF MONEY CONSIDERED PALTRY BY FORMER REBELS. IT REMAINS AN OPEN QUESTION HOW MUCH MORE WILL BE NEEDED TO MAINTAIN THE PEACE AND IT MAY BE THAT EVEN MUCH MORE MAY NOT BE ENOUGH. AS NOTED IN HIGH COMMISSIONER ANACKO'S REMARKS AT THE SEPTEMBER 8 CEREMONY IN AGADEZ, POVERTY AND MISERY WERE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES TO THE TUAREQ REBELLION. ADDRESSING ADEQUATELY THESE CAUSES WILL TAKE MANY YEARS OF CONSISTENT HIGH LEVELS OF INVESTMENT, FROM BOTH PUBLIC AND

PRIVATE SOURCES. NONETHELESS, DONORS SHOULD CONTINUE IN THE MONTHS
AND YEARS AHEAD TO EXPAND THEIR WORK WITH THE GON TO SUPPORT THE
MAINTENANCE OF PEACE IN NIGER'S AIR AND AZAWAK REGIONS. END
COMMENT.
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